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ABSTRACT

Library collections and their value and uses in the Library of Congress are the topics addressed in this pamphlet, which features two opposing papers. In "Collections at the Core," Stephen Ostrow argues that priority should be given to such collection-based activities as developing, preserving, and providing access to, in their original formats, bodies of materials that the Library of Congress has custody over. A distinction is made between collection-based and information-based institutions, and it is noted that, while a library may provide access to information if it has a developed collection, the reverse of this statement is not true. In "Idols in the Library," Robert Zich advises scholars not to be misled into mistaking the piece of paper for the facts or fancies which it embodies. This essay advocates the implementation of information technologies in library systems and also recognizes the aesthetic service which libraries provide. An introduction provides background information for the papers, and an epilogue cites a report by the Management and Planning Committee of the Library of Congress (dated November 1988) which embodies the two philosophies: while the Library of Congress can be recognized as a collection-based institution, technological solutions are needed to some pressing collection-based problems. The epilogue also briefly describes one such technological endeavor: the American Memory Program, a 6-year pilot project whose goal is to deliver the content of Library of Congress collections in American history and culture to libraries on optical media. (MAB)

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Research Collections in the Information Age

The Library of Congress Looks to the Future

views by
Stephen E. Ostrow *and* Robert Zich

edited by John Y. Cole, *Director,*
The Center for the Book

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Preface

There is ready agreement that ours is an "information society," but the nature and the uses of information are topics of continuing debate. The Center for the Book in the Library of Congress has contributed to this important discussion through three of its publications. In 1979 it published *Gresham's Law: Knowledge or Information?*, a speech by Librarian of Congress Daniel J. Boorstin which focuses on "the distinction between knowledge and information, the importance of the distinction, and the dangers of failing to recognize it."

Boorstin celebrated libraries and their collections as "knowledge-institutions." Two related questions were at the heart of the Center for the Book's 1987 publication *Books in Our Future: Perspectives and Proposals*. What is the future of the traditional book in the electronic age? And how are new technologies affecting books, reading, and learning in America? *Books in Our Future* explores both questions, presenting a variety of comments and opinions. In 1988, the "somewhat uneven trajectory of the public library as knowledge-institution" was traced in the center's booklet *The Knowledge Institutions in the Information Age: The Special Case of the Public Library*, a lecture by R. Kathleen Molz of the Columbia University School of Library Service.

Library collections and their value and uses in a research institution, namely the Library of Congress, are the subjects addressed in this pamphlet, which features two brief papers by Library of Congress specialists Stephen E. Ostrow, chief of the

Prints and Photographs Division, and Robert Zich, director of the Planning Office. The papers, prepared as part of a year-long planning and management review initiated by Librarian of Congress James H. Billington, were presented at a meeting of the Library's Council of Scholars on March 10, 1989. They are published by the Center for the Book as part of its mission of stimulating public interest in the vital role of books, libraries, and library collections in our civilization.

JOHN Y. COLE
Director
The Center for the Book

Introduction

The collections of the Library of Congress, in the words of Librarian of Congress James H. Billington, permit the Library "to participate in the unending human effort to winnow information into knowledge, to distill knowledge into wisdom, and to bring it all to bear on the enduring American dream." Today the Library of Congress probably is the world's largest library and it certainly is the most ambitious. The scope of its collections and services is universal, and not limited by subject, format, or national boundary. It collects research materials in more than 450 languages, and two-thirds of the books it acquires each year are in languages other than English. Its collection of books, pamphlets, manuscripts, music, maps, newspapers, microforms, motion pictures, photographs, graphic arts, and other materials numbers over 90 million items. The Library of Congress contains the largest Luso-Hispanic collection outside of Latin America and the largest Chinese, Japanese, and Russian collections outside of those countries. It has the world's largest collections of maps, documentary photographs, sheet music, and motion pictures. These collections are widely available, as are the bibliographic, research, and interpretive services that they support. Thus the Library of Congress is a unique reservoir of knowledge and information for understanding the entire world.

Why did this happen? How did a library established by the American national legislature for its own use become a library that is universal in scope and service, an institution that

takes all knowledge as its province and all cultures as its audience?

The Library of Congress is a world library today because Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826), its principal founder, believed that to do its job a democratic legislature needed information and ideas from throughout the world.

Established by the American Congress in 1800 in the new capital city of Washington, the Library of Congress initially contained historical and legal works that legislators agreed were useful. Thomas Jefferson began recommending books for the fledgling library when he was president of the United States, from 1801 to 1809, but his most important contribution came in 1814, after the British had invaded Washington and destroyed the U.S. Capitol and its library. By then retired to Monticello, Jefferson offered to sell his personal library of over six thousand volumes to Congress to "recommence" its library. The purchase was approved in 1815, doubling the previous size of the Library of Congress and permanently expanding the scope of its collections.

Jefferson's collection reflected his wide-ranging interests in subjects such as architecture, science, geography, and literature, and it included books in French, German, Latin, and Greek. Anticipating the argument that his library might be too comprehensive for use by the legislature, Jefferson asserted that there was "no subject to which a member of Congress might not have occasion to refer." Congress agreed, and since then so have presidents of the United States, members of Congress, and Librarians of Congress. The Jeffersonian concept of universality, the belief that all subjects are important to the library of the American legislature, is the philosophy and rationale behind the comprehensive collecting policies of today's Library of Congress.

When he took office as the thirteenth Librarian of Congress on September 14, 1987, historian James H. Billington emphasized the "distinctively American linkage of a library to a legislature" as the unique and most important characteristic of the Library of Congress. In this spirit, he expressed his hope that the Library, drawing on its remarkable resources, could soon become "a living encyclopedia of democracy—not just a mausoleum for culture, but a catalyst for civilization." A com-

prehensive review and planning process was announced in December 1987, with a Librarian's Management and Planning Committee, consisting of twenty-five mid-level managers and staff members, at the center. The Library's various constituents were to participate through advisory committees, and a professional management consulting firm would make recommendations about administration and management. Forums with librarians around the country would be part of the process. Announcing the review, Dr. Billington explained that its purpose was "to consider how we should begin shaping the Library of Congress now, to suit the job it should be doing for the twenty-first century." The process, he noted, "will seek more effective ways to affirm and strengthen our mission as a dynamic national library and a vital center for ideas and scholarship."

In January 1988 Dr. Billington issued a specific charge to his new Management and Planning Committee, and it was clear that the collections of the Library would be of prime concern. Among other tasks, he asked the committee to recommend ways to improve methods for selecting, cataloging, preserving, and maintaining the Library's collections and to increase and deepen the direct scholarly use of the Library.

The Management and Planning Committee and the various advisory groups considered the Library's collections in a variety of ways: through studies and subcommittee reviews, by visits to other institutions, and in discussions at many levels. Two perspectives on the Library and its collections were gained through the papers prepared at the request of Dr. Billington by two Library of Congress specialists, Stephen E. Ostrow, chief of the Prints and Photographs Division, and Robert Zich, director of the Planning Office. Dr. Ostrow was asked to present the case of the Library of Congress as a collection-based institution; Mr. Zich was asked to make the case that the information derived from collections was more important than the collections themselves. The issues raised in each paper are of interest to all research libraries.

Collections at the Core

by Stephen E. Ostrow

This paper is based on discussions about what is at the core of the institution called the Library of Congress. Should the Library view itself as primarily a collection-based institution, or as first and foremost an information-based institution? In considering this question we are attempting to define the Library's long-term future and to establish its priorities. This could lead to differences in degree that result in fundamental differences in the kind of institution we become. In terms of both the abstractions at the heart of this debate and the practicalities as they relate to the Library, I entered these discussions as an ardent "collectionist."

Let me begin with some definitions. A collection-based institution is one that gives the highest priority to developing, preserving, and providing direct access to, in their original formats, bodies of material over which it has custody. All other activities are secondary. An information-based institution, on the other hand, is one that gives the highest priority to providing information about, or derived from, and indirect access to, in surrogate form, bodies of material over which it does not necessarily have custody. This means that such activities as the creation and dissemination of videodiscs or the provision of catalog records, whether or not the collections on which they are based are in the custody of the institution, have a higher institutional priority than developing, preserving, or providing direct access to collections in its custody.

According to these definitions, we are dealing with a false dichotomy when discussing collection-based institutions. No institution can provide direct access to its collections without also creating information that makes such direct access possible, information such as catalog records. The reverse, however, is not true. An information-based institution must have direct access to collections from which information can be derived or surrogates created, but it need not have custody of any of these collections. Direct access to collections and their records can be—and currently is—provided to information-based institutions by other institutions that are themselves collection-based organizations.

The Library of Congress is both collection-based and, to a degree that goes beyond the necessities of its collections, information-based. It has custody of over 90 million items, of which 56 million (some 65 percent) form part of its special collections, including such nonbook materials as prints, photographs, architectural drawings, manuscripts, motion pictures, and maps. Much of this material is unique or rare and much of it serves as primary documentation. Conversely, the Library of Congress, as a matter of course, provides information that is not derived from its own collections. For example, it supplies catalog records for books that will not be retained by the Library and information about related collections at other institutions.

During the planning process, we have increasingly acknowledged the Library's historic inability to meet its obligations to the collections over which it has custody, and this has resulted in our quantifying the extraordinary dimensions of the problem. For example, the Prints and Photographs Division has approximately 12.4 million items in its processing arrearage, items that are not regularly served to researchers. Significant numbers of these items need preservation treatment, many because they have "inherent vice" owing to their own chemical make-up or that of their housing and hence are actively self-destructing. They need to be physically organized, labeled or marked, and adequately housed for use. They need to be cataloged so librarians can provide patrons direct access to them. It would take an estimated $98 million (in 1989 dollars) in labor costs alone to eliminate the current processing arrearages in the Prints and Photographs Division. This does not address new

arrearages that would develop if the division's collections continued to grow at the present average rate of over 500,000 items a year. Even if we eliminated our current arrearages over the next twenty years with an unprecedented infusion of new funding, we would have developed a new processing arrearage of 10 million items in those same twenty years, leaving us with only a 19 percent net gain. Perceptions of this sort have led to suggestions that the Library cut back on some of its information-based functions and transfer resources to its collection-based functions.

Conversely, it has become increasingly clear that "new technologies" (a very seductive term) make it possible for an institution like the Library of Congress to think of becoming the ultimate, populist, information-based institution. Serious consideration is being given to the Library of Congress becoming the locus of a national information network. The linkage of computers to videodiscs has led to the initiation of the American Memory project at the Library, with the goal of making the content of many of our collections widely available in surrogate form. An article on the Library's videodisc program that appeared in the *New York Times* in 1986 suggests that such a change is a historical imperative. The author gives full scope to the populist dream for information-based institutions and fundamentally redefines the Library's mission.

> These new methods—basically a blend of video technology and data processing—may hasten the continuing change in the social function of libraries. Once the restricted repositories of arcane knowledge for various priesthoods and ruling elites, libraries have become increasingly accessible to literate populations in modern democratic societies. The Library of Congress, in particular, was founded on the premise of universal accessibility. Its new electronic ventures will help it achieve this aim. Especially if linked with home video devices, the library will better serve its mandated function as the nation's foremost public data base. (Hans Fantel, "A Key to the Library of Tomorrow," *New York Times*, May 18, 1986, section 2, p. 26.)

The Library is faced with two imperatives, each of which carries its own justification and each of which is expressed

as a priority. The Library must change, and the current planning process is predicated on defining what that change should be and establishing the infrastructure in which it can occur. How much can the Library change in one direction, at the expense of the other, without violating its institutional identity?

I would argue that the Library's collections currently are at risk, and that it cannot maintain its collection-based functions without massive incremental increases in resources for collection-based purposes. If the Library moves away from its functions as a collection-based institution and shifts its resources to provide "universal accessibility" and to become "the nation's foremost public data base," it will perforce become a very different kind of institution than it is now. In seeking new strengths, it will lose those it already has. I call this the "Ugolino Scenario," after Dante's Count Ugolino, who, sealed in a tower with his children and left to die of starvation, first ate his children and then, ultimately, starved. (This is one interpretation of Canto 33 of the *Inferno*.)

In answer to the fundamental questions that must be asked in reference to the collection/information dichotomy as it relates to the Library's future, I would respond:

- To the degree possible, collections should be developed and preserved, and access should be provided to them in their original format.
- The Library should be a collection-based institution that makes this its highest priority.

In stating this I recognize the following:

- Although there are materials that clearly must be preserved in their original format—such as rare books or fine prints—and others that clearly need not be preserved in their original format—such as contemporary news and business magazines—there is a vast body of materials between these extremes for which such clear distinctions cannot be made. We must establish a continuum of priorities against which the necessity of preserving materials in their original formats or the suitability of substituting surrogates must be measured.
- There are also materials that cannot be preserved in their

original format. Nitrate negatives, for example, inevitably self-destruct; to be preserved, they must be copied.

- Preserving and storing original materials requires significantly more resources than preserving and storing surrogate materials. For example, the millions of items in the collections of the Prints and Photographs Division could be stored on 150 videodiscs, which would occupy only six running feet of shelf space.
- The mission of an information-based institution is one whose time has come as technological advances and an explosion of information come together to make the function of providing information not only possible but necessary, especially in a democratic society.

These observations help to define the limitations of a collection-based institution, some of the advantages of an information-based institution, and the historical context in which this discussion is taking place. In no way, however, can they be seen to deny two fundamental facts. First, an information-based institution cannot exist without access to collections from which that information is derived—without, in short, the support of a collection-based institution. Second, information, to include information presented as a surrogate for a primary document, is derivative, and as such it can be incomplete or wrong. The first of these facts is self-evident; the second needs further amplification.

In the last analysis, an overwhelming amount of material in the Library's collections consists of artifacts containing information that cannot be captured in surrogate form. That information often is intrinsic to the artifact as a whole, and hence does not survive the fragmentation and dislocation that occur when it is transferred to another format. Furthermore, the artifacts often have an intrinsic aesthetic or historic value that is lost in surrogate form.

Many of these artifacts tend to be unique or rare primary documents that are studied and reassessed by researchers in their original format. They are sufficiently complex to yield different information to different questions. With the passage of time, the context of the research, the types of information being sought, the technology available for seeking that information, the technology available for preserving artifacts in their original format, and even the perception of an artifact's intrinsic

aesthetic or historical value, are subject to change. The technology for creating the surrogates may change as well. Therefore a surrogate for an artifact and information extrapolated from it are likely to be dated, incomplete, or of insufficient quality, or all three, thirty years or even one year hence, requiring a return to the original artifact. Without the collection-based institution, this return to the information in its original format would not be possible.

But why the Library of Congress? Why should it be a collection-based institution? Why should the collections in its custody have a higher priority than information derived from collections in general?

Because the Library must continue to care for and augment its collections if it is to be a research institution of the highest order. The original artifacts in question often are unique or rare primary documents that yield some of the best research information available. This is particularly true of the special collections, which form 65 percent of the Library's total holdings.

The Library must remain a collection-based institution if it is to take advantage of its extraordinary collections and meet its obligations to them, which is another way of saying it must do so because it already is, uniquely and overwhelmingly, the collection-based institution par excellence.

And last, our national library has yet to become, uniquely or overwhelmingly, the information-based institution par excellence. For all of its promise as the locus of "the nation's foremost public data base," the Library of Congress today competes with many other institutions, in both the private and public sectors, which create and disseminate surrogates for and information about our own collections and collections elsewhere. These institutions often do this with the Library's cooperation and in the context of their own highly developed relationships with particular constituencies. The existence of these relationships in itself suggests the advantages of having a variety of information-based institutions. Such institutions will increase as the technology improves, the networks spread, and joint ventures with the Library of Congress and her sister institutions become more easily initiated. Information-based institutions cannot thrive unless organizations such as the Library of Congress continue to provide a home for collections in their original formats.

Idols in the Library

by Robert Zich

Research libraries traditionally house sources of both information and aesthetic satisfaction. Until twenty-five years ago, the medium for these sources was almost always a material object, often paper. Indeed most researchers usually consulted books or magazines. The greatest libraries also had prints, motion pictures, and phonograph records, but the centerpiece was the book and the periodical.

Looking for a moment only at the information domain, in which books and periodicals have traditionally played an especially vital part, we see that today computers have insinuated themselves into library and research work in such measure that some small special libraries now consist of only a few key reference books, a computer terminal, and a librarian. Indeed it is possible that a library with this configuration and a deep pocket could possess greater access to information than some earlier libraries covering acres. The computer has changed the nature of acquiring library materials, processing them, searching for them, and making them available to patrons, and now it bids fair to change the way we use them.

The publication *Books in Print* is widely known, but, sadly, the publication *Books No Longer in Print* also flourishes. The R.R. Bowker company issues both annually, together with periodic updates. Reference book publishers have recently been swarming to issue what would have been bulky reference books in conventional publishing in the new compact electronic CD-

ROM (compact disc—read-only-memory) format. Whole encyclopedias and more are contained on a single iridescent silver disk. And so with *Books in Print*. But the imaginative publishers like Bowker are not just issuing a rainbow disk version of the original but are adding new features possible only in the new format. Now we can search the entire text of *Books in Print* by any word or combination of words—old stuff for computer searchers—and we can, after finding the desired citation, also instantly and automatically zap the book order to any of several vendors.

Catalogers today do their work using a national service like the Research Libraries Information Network, a vendor's cataloging system, or even something home grown, but rarely would they work without using some sort of computer. After cataloging, a book proceeds to its place on the shelves, where with bar codes and security inserts, it awaits its destiny, knowing always that its movements will be closely monitored. Patrons may search for it using on-line catalogs, which if they are the latest thing, will take the reader's query, show the listings of relevant titles, advise on similar works, let the patron simulate a browse of spines of books on the pertinent shelves, and show a library map with directions to the identified works. Any form of query—"Books on the Italian quattrocento, please"—will be answered by the user-friendly system.

The on-line catalog may include listings not just of what is in the local library or the local library system or that system's network affiliates or even what is in the Library of Congress but of all these things, and indeed even more. The British Library is converting its catalogs to machine-readable form, as are the Bibliothèque Nationale and many other great libraries. It might be possible at some time in the near future to link CD-ROM or other electronic versions of these catalogs so that a single search would, in a flash, sort through millions of citations that represent the holdings of most of the major research libraries of the world. Latest additions would be identified through an automatic switch from searching a CD-ROM to doing an on-line search of a central file or a home institution file.

The CD-ROM or on-line services may, indeed, include more than just citations to primary or secondary sources. They may supply the original texts themselves. Recently, Georgetown University issued a flier inviting scholars to a series of seminars

on "Enhancing Higher Education through Microcomputers." This intensive two-day program included sessions on, for example, "ISOCRATES: Greek Literature on CD-ROM."

Using a list of six hundred periodicals, I can sit at home, choose any, and read them in full at my computer using a service called Dialog. But Dialog is not the only source of articles. The Nexis service has the last ten years of the *New York Times*—and the Associated Press wire, UPI, Reuters, and the *Washington Post*. Various other services offer the *Grolier Encyclopedia* and *Who's Who*. Lexis contains more legal text than most small law libraries. Some Australians have put the text of the Bible on a computer chip. The chip works with a device the size of a paperback book that permits you to read the Bible. A Washington firm has packaged in one large briefcase a portable computer, portable telephone, modem, printer, and Fax machine. Anywhere within portable telephone earshot of a telephone transmitter—at a picnic, at the Roller Derby, in bed—you can have access to the digest of soap operas in the *Washington Post* going back at least ten years or read an article on the Hittites in the *Grolier Encyclopedia*. Perhaps within a decade, we will even be able to call up documents just by asking for them and then, if we wish, have them read to us. This is just the beginning.

An associate director of libraries at Renselaer Polytechnic Institute, Pat Molholt, speaks of the Cheshire Cat Syndrome in today's libraries. The big body of the cat—library collections—is threatening to disappear into the electronic ether, leaving only the smile, the contented reader, behind.

But will the reader be truly content? And if not content, will his or her discontent be soundly based or will it be rooted in a kind of idolatry? Idolatry involves taking the likeness for the thing. In libraries, it is taking pieces of paper for facts or ideas or fancies. It is worship of original formats despite all. Despite all. That is important. Everyone is aware of the virtues of traditional media, particularly books. Compact, sturdy, efficient, economical, sometimes beautiful. . . . Needless to say, you can't easily take a big clumsy computer to bed with you or to the beach or the bathtub—but you can take a book. You cannot, in the traditional way, put a bookmark in a computer, feel paper's texture on a computer screen, flip the pages of a

computer and browse, or read the spines of computers sitting along a shelf.

But think of this: if you could easily do all those things, or the functional and aesthetic equivalent, would you then use computers the way you now use books? Because technology has begun to realize these ends. If you could do even more in the new medium—search out instantly any word or words or have instant access to vast bodies of text—would you then use the new medium? If the answer to both questions is "No," then idolatry may be the problem. In *The Life of Reason* Santayana wrote, "Fanaticism consists in redoubling your effort when you have forgotten your aim." Idolatry in libraries is the fanaticism in which the love of ideas, information, and words that happen to be on paper has lost its way and become a zealous love of paper and bindings.

An idea must, of course, find a material medium to convey it from the mind of one person through sensory organs to the mind of another. That medium has consequences. McLuhan says it radically modulates the idea, but all agree that the medium is not transparent. When does the change rendered by a new medium help and when does it hurt?

Well, it hurts when the medium is microfilm. You get a bad picture and a picture found only through hard labor. With microfilm, you can barely read small print, copies are murky and indistinct, and your hands cannot control the search except by crude reeling through great film spools to pinpoint the right image or by fumbling with a file of fiche, pulling out the needed items and placing them one by one on a balky machine. By comparison, what a relief to page through a newspaper that a sneeze would translate to confetti! Microfilm gives paper a good name.

It also hurts to read certain kinds of text on a present-day computer screen. Most people can accept the glowing screen when the work to be done is a browsing review of masses of text or close reading of short passages. Most particularly, we can accept the terminal when it radiates with our own prose—that is, when we are processing our own words. More exposure to the computer screen than this becomes, for most, uncomfortable.

But cast your minds ahead to the time when what is only dimly foreshadowed now becomes the reality. In the realm of information, we must seize this transformation and shape it to serve the needs of the scholar. We must identify precisely what it is that browsing does and make the machine help us do it—if that is possible. We must require the machine to accommodate electronic bookmarks and cross-page reviews of text. We must require the machine to produce images that please, and even soothe, the eye. We want all that the book has given us and more.

But it is essential that scholars contribute toward this happy end. Scholars must cast aside idolatry of paper and help us boffins build the scholarly world of tomorrow.

Up to this point we have talked about the informative function of libraries. What about the aesthetic? No technology has yet presented itself that can begin to duplicate electronically the wonderful objects that Stephen Ostrow has championed so ferociously, effectively, and rightly in his several years at the Library of Congress. The fine prints and photographs, among other special materials, are preeminently objects that have defied satisfactory reproduction. And there are treasures—historical landmarks, for example—where reproduction is beside the point. We must take pains to secure these objects and preserve them indefinitely as originals. When the Library's Capitol Hill buildings have emptied of most routine books and magazines and other routine paper, the marble halls need not suffer the indignity of the splendid old movie palaces and train depots when they lost their original function. We can fill the halls with superb objects that are irreplaceable—that must be seen in their original format. In so doing, we may blur the distinction between library and museum, but so be it. Our metaphoric Cheshire Cat may be smiling not only at the scholar who in his own office has access to the library resources of the world but also at the glory of the striking objects that have inherited the exhibit halls and study rooms of the world's great libraries.

Epilogue

The foregoing papers, framed as opposing views to stimulate discussion and debate, were presented on March 10, 1989, to the Library's Council of Scholars, an advisory group of distinguished scholars. A real debate, however, never took place, in part because of lack of time but also because the first reaction on the part of several of the scholars was shock at Mr. Zich's stance, which was taken as "pro-machine" and therefore anti-book and antithetical to traditional library and scholarly values. Much of the limited time available for discussion was absorbed by Mr. Zich's reassurances that, indeed, he was on the side of the scholars.

The reaction of the scholars was not surprising. If arguments are presented "pro-collection" vs. "pro-technology," emotional attachments from a lifetime of library use are hard to overcome. A more difficult question, addressed directly by Dr. Ostrow, is the need to encourage and establish institutional priorities that would provide for the processing and preservation of an increasing number of individual collections. A related and perhaps more positive way of framing some of the same issues is to find ways to take advantage of new technologies to catalog, preserve, and make more accessible the collections which our predecessors have passed along to us.

The general approach of using new technologies to serve the collections is the one the Library's Management and Planning Committee takes in its report. Dated November 18, 1988, the report recognizes the importance of the Library of Congress as a collection-based institution, but it also encourages technological solutions to some of the most pressing collection-

based problems. The statement Dr. Billington made on February 1, 1989, before the Committee on Appropriations of the U.S. House of Representatives translates several of the committee's recommendations into specific budget requests for strengthening and preserving the collections. It also provides details about the American Memory Project, an important new Library of Congress collection-based endeavor that has developed as a result of discussions with librarians around the country during the year of review and assessment.

The November 18, 1988, report of the Management and Planning Committee to the Librarian of Congress is notable for its recognition of the importance of the Library's collections: "The collections . . . are central to the provision of service to all users, both in person and remote, as well as to our role in a national library network, including provision of cataloging data to the nation's libraries, coordinating collection development and preservation efforts, and providing access to the collections." Recognizing that "issues dealing with collections touch on virtually all parts of the Library," the committee brought all its recommendations concerning collections together in one chapter. These recommendations included "making the virtual elimination of unprocessed arrearages a primary goal of the library," changes in the macro-organizational structure for collection development, improvements in the effectiveness and efficiency of cataloging, an increase in the number of bibliographies compiled, and a strengthening of the Library's commitment to the preservation of its book, photography, motion picture, and recorded sound collections.

Dr. Billington's February 1, 1989, statement before the Subcommittee on Legislative Branch Appropriations continued to emphasize collections and revealed that the Library's new organizational concept called for a "Collections Department" that would combine elements of the former Processing Services and Research Services departments. On a practical level, the Librarian alerted Congress to a severe problem: "a massive and accumulating backlog in materials acquisition and book processing, which can not longer be deferred without permanent damage to the Library's collections." Increases therefore were sought for:

- strengthening the Congressional Research Service's technical resources;

- purchasing foreign books and materials with undervalued U.S. dollars;
- obtaining books and materials from Latin America and West Africa through new collection facilities;
- preserving in new formats and sharing on a pilot basis with Americans across the country key elements of our unique collections through the American Memory project;
- beginning to apply and market new technologies, especially optical disk, in order to store, index, retrieve, duplicate, and distribute electronically large quantities of information;
- maintaining and expanding the preservation of the Library's collections through mass deacidification and the preservation of distintegrating photographs and films;
- expanding systems automation and workstation access to information; and
- adding space to store three million more volumes.

The purpose of the new American Memory program, the Librarian explained, was "to share the collections of the Congress's library throughout America in the form of optical disks and other new technologies." With its goal of delivering the actual content of Library of Congress collections in American history and culture to libraries and other institutions on optical media, American Memory will provide a series of products in different formats and media. It is a six-year pilot project that will begin in fiscal year 1990. The first endeavor will create an optical disk containing unique archival materials picturing America from 1890 to 1920. These electronic copies will be disseminated to libraries throughout the nation.

In summarizing why he was asking the Congress for an increase of $17.1 million for collection-based efforts in fiscal 1990, Dr. Billington was forthright and succinct in describing the Library's research collections: "The Library of Congress is the greatest single resource in the world for the information age we are now entering. The added investment in this unparalled creation of the Congress will assure the continuation of proven services, and make new ones possible that could not even be imagined elsewhere." The Librarian's request for support of American Memory and increased preservation and cataloging efforts was approved by the Congress and the president.

Colophon

Type	Palatino with italic
Composition	Monotype Composition Company, Baltimore, Maryland
Cover Paper	Strathmore Rhododendron, cobalt
Text Paper	Mohawk Superfine, soft white, eggshell finish
Printing	Garamond/Pridemark Press, Inc., Baltimore, Maryland
Design	William Chenoweth

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